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ABSTRACT

An understanding of the "situational" characteristics of the organizational forces that influence the relationships between environmental, management, and performance variables is now coming to be seen as a key to understanding the management process itself. This paper is a synthesis of the contingency theory literature drawn from the public, business, and educational sectors. Focus is given to an identification and analysis of the basic assumptions underpinning contingency theory; the contingent nature of organizational design, leadership, and planning variables; and the implications for practicing administrators. The objective is to shape the conclusions of the synthesis into a useful conceptual tool, providing greater facility for description, analysis, and prediction. (Author/JM)

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SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND CONTINGENCY THEORY:

AN EMERGING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Contingency theory is perhaps the most powerful current sweeping over the public and private sectors of management. An understanding of the "situational" characteristics of the organizational forces that influence the relationships between environmental, management, and performance variables is now coming to be seen as a key to understanding the management process itself. Unfortuantely, the field of educational administration has yet to become extensively involved. Focus in this paper is given to an identification and analysis of (1) the basic assumptions underpinning contingency theory, and (2) the contingent nature of organizational structure, leadership, and planning variables. The objective is to build a conceptual framework that will be a useful conceptual tool providing greater facility for description, analysis, and prediction in educational organizations. The paper concludes with a series of research questions intended to establish lines of investigation for the field of school organization and administration.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND CONTINGENCY THEORY:

AN EMERGING PERSPECTIVE

Like the business of building better mousetraps, this century has seen the continuous scholarly pursuit of the special ingredients that make up an ever more effective manager and management process. A variety of management orientations emerged out of this pursuit (e.g., scientific management, human relations, social system theory), each with conceptual linchpins rooted in differing basic assumptions about the nature of work, motivation, rationality, efficiency, governance, and the like.

In recent years another management orientationwith its own basic assumptions has edged onto the screen. This orientation has for centuries been at the core of practitioner behavior, but has been seen basically as an anomaly, reflective of inefficiency or unpreparedness, and thus overlooked by management scientists. Currently, thechanging "situational" character of management is now coming to be understood as a key to the management process itself. A clear illustration of "contingency theory," as this orientation is called, is discussed by Leo Tolstoy in 1869 in his classic War and Peace. Following a major battle near Moscow, between the armies of Napoleon and the Russian General Kutuzov, Tolstoy discusses a problem every manager who makes critical decisions can identify with.

> A commander-in-chief never finds himself at the beginning of an event--the position from which we always contemplate it. The general is always in the midst of a series of shifting events and so he can never at any point deliberate on the whole import of what is going on. Imperceptibly, moment by moment, an event takes shape in all its bearings, and at every instant of this uninterrupted, consecutive shaping of events the commander-in-chief is at the heart of a most complex play of intrigues, cares, contingencies, authorities, projects, counsels, threats and deceits, and is continually obliged to reply to innumerable, often mutually contradictory questions.[1]

Many management scholars and practitioners would now agree with the observation that "at the moment, contingency theory is perhaps the most powerful current sweeping over the organization field. The history of many fields shows a movement from universalistic principles to situational relationships and principles. The current prominence of contingency theory suggests that organization theory is entering a period of scientific maturity."[2] As an illustration of one speciality, ". . . the very nature of corporate planning is undergoing a dramatic change, and the companies that fare best in coming years may well be the ones that adapt most quickly to the new styles of planning. Instead of relying on a single corporate plan with perhaps one or two variations, top management at more and more companies is now getting a whole battery of contingency plans and alternate scenarios."[3]

Although contingency theory has received its greatest attention and use in the field of business,[4] it has been making inroads into the public administration sector[5] and the academic disciplines.[6] Yet, strangely the field of school organization and administration has remained relatively outside the research arena that draws upon the basic assumptions and conceptual frame works underpinning the contingency theory view of management. For example, a computer literature search of the ERIC data base was conducted with a code word of "contingency." Of the 242 citations reported out, only 10 were remotely associated with issues of school organization and administration. The remaining 232 typically treated teaching-learning issues of the classroom, mostly in the field of special education.

Hence, in establishing the direction of this paper, the academic literature from which the concepts, issues, and studies are drawn will

reflect both public and private management sectors. Given the notion that the situational character of an organization is at the core of contingency theory, such theory can be seen as forming the basis of a variety of strategies or structures. Such theory can be seen, as will be the case in this paper, as linking organizational structure to outcomes, or as an aid to planning, or as the basis of leadership. It also could be useful in such diverse areas as budget construction, establishing reward structures, or evaluating performance.

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

(1) to examine the basic assumptions and conceptual foundations of contingency theory.

(2) to portray the contingency theory of management as a technique of flexible response to conditions of uncertainty in organization settings.

(3) to establish a contingency theory framework for the managerial requirements of (a) organizational structure, (b) organizational planning, and (c) organizational leadership.

(4) to conclude with a series of research questions intended to establish important lines of investigation for the field of education.

Under Conditions of Uncertainty

An organization can be defined as "a social system consisting of subsystems of resource variables interrelated by various management policies, practices and techniques which interact with variables in the environmental suprasystem to achieve a set of goals or objectives."[7] The complex organization's core problem is uncertainty, and "coping with uncertainty," James D. Thompson observes, is "the essence of the administrative process."[8] Under conditions of uncertainty, the decision-makers cannot assign precise probabilities of success to a specific initiative. Hence the element of risk enters in the decision-making formula.[9] Organizations, including school systems, have tended to respond

to this issue by what Cyert and March refer to as "uncertainty avoidance."[10] For example, managers might divert the energy and resources necessary for long term planning to the short term need of putting out "fires," or imposing standard operating procedures, or attempting to influence the passage of favorable state legislation, or writing uncertainty-absorbing contracts. "In short," Cyert and March conclude, "they achieve a reasonably manageable decision situtation by avoiding planning where plans depend on predictions of uncertain future events and by emphasizing planning where the plans can be made self-confirming through some control device."[11]

In contrast, the emergence of contingency theory represents an orientation that enables us to conceive of an organization as an open system composed of a complex of interacting subunits faced with uncertainty, and through the adaptation of organizational structure, planning strategies, and leader behavior, acceptable levels of certainty can be achieved.

The Context of Contingency Theory

Contingency theory is an extension of the open system concept. "The most general and fundamental property of a system," Parsons and Shils write, "is the interdependence of parts or variables" and how the parts relate to and give order to the whole.[12] The external environment of an organization serves as its "life support system," and any shifts in pressures or expectations in the external environment have their repercussions on the operations of the organization. For example, when the community expands under pressures of growth, the school district will have to respond by building more schools.

Open system theory concentrates on the dependency relationships and

exchanges between the organization and its external environment. Contingency theory, on the other hand, analyzes the internal adjustments of the organization (e.g., decision-making process, structure, technology, instructional techniques) as it seeks to meet the shifting demands of its external or internal environments.

The recognition of shifting conditions, both in the external and the internal environment of an organization, establishes the condition that contingency theory of management be situational in character. Such a theory can be defined as ". . . identifying and developing functional relationships between environmental, management and performance variables."[13] In this case, performance variables deal with organizational outcomes.

Contingency variables are situational variables that influence the relationship between managerial strategy or organizational structure and organizational outcomes. These contingency variables can be a product of something happening in the external environment, such as increasing parent pressures for more basic education, or in the internal environment, such as the degree of teacher autonomy or racial tension in a school. Stated another way:

A = some selected managerial strategy or organizational design

B = situational contingency variables

C = a measure of organizational (group or individual) performance

The relationship between A and C is moderated in a predictable way by B. Hence, an identification and analysis of the key contingency variables is essential for a school system because these variables will limit or enhance the effectiveness of particular management strategies or organizational designs.

The next section will examine some assumptions associated with this new management perspective.

Basic Assumptions

Contingency theory, as it seeks to meet the demands of complex problem-solving, is rooted in a number of basic assumptions about organizations and individuals. A few key assumptions are as follows:

1. Middle Ground. Contingency theory stresses the view that (1) there is some middle ground between the existence of universal principals of management that fit all organizational types, and that (2) each organization is unique therefore each situation must be studied as unique.

2. Goals. While an organization may have a basic overarching goal (e.g., educate children, make sick people well, win the war), a maze of formal and informal goals, often overlapping, uncoordinated and contradictory, govern the development of events.[14]

3. Open Systems. All organizations are open systems.[15]

4. Performance. The level of performance is basically determined by the match between external requirements and internal states and processes.[16]

5. Basic Function. "The basic function of administration appears to be co-alignment, not merely of people (in coalitions) but of institutionalized action--of technology and task environment into a viable domain, and of organizational design and structure appropriate to it."[17]

6. Best Way. There is no one best way of organization and administration.

7. Approaches. "Different (management) approaches may be appropriate in subparts of the same organization. Managing the campus police is not the same as managing the history department."[18]

8. Leadership Style. Different leadership styles are appropriate for different problematic situations.

9. Initiation. Managers rarely have the opportunity to take on a problem at its beginnings, which are usually numerous and stem from many sources (e.g., courts, parental expectations, etc.).[19]

10. Information. A manager never knows all that is going on around him or her.

The Greater Environment of an Open System

Traditionally, as Stephen Hencley observed at a national conference on

leadership, educational administration has been viewed from a closed system perspective, and we lack the ". . . conceptual systems with which to relate the behavior of leaders as they deal with this new (larger environment) phenomena . . . . On a broad scale, our concepts break down very fast, because they fail to apply to these new conditions in meaningful fashion."[20]

The emergence of open system theory in recent years removed many conceptual "blinders" and has impressed upon us the notion that "the behavior of an organization is contingent upon the social field of forces in which it occurs and must be understood in terms of the organization's interaction with that environmental field." [21] Open system theory has provided an extremely useful framework for trying to deal with the questions of <u>why</u> and <u>how</u> the greater environments of schools, such as parental expectations, shifting values, inflation rates, and city governments, impact on the specialized structure and functioning of educational systems. Katz and Kahn categorize the major fields of forces in the external environment which shape the character of the contingencies which impact on an organization.[22]

(1) Cultural [e.g., social standards of excellence, ethnic balance, affirmative action]

(2) Political [e.g., education codes, public representation in decision making, community satisfaction]

(3) Economic [e.g., educational finance, federal funding, job market]

(4) Informational and Technical [e.g., state of knowledge, communication networks, instructional technology]

(5) Physical [e.g., school facilities, boundaries, transportation equipment]

It is important to note that each of these major fields of force vary

on a continuum between polar points on four separate axes. These axes according to Katz and Kahn are as follows:

(1) Stability--Turbulence. The degree of turbulence signals the intensity of the problems to be treated.

(2) Diversity--Homogeneity. The degree to which the environment itself is organized.

(3) Clustering--Randomness. The degree to which the environment is structured or clustered as contrasted to anarchy or randomness.

(4) Scarcity--Munificence. The degree to which resources (e.g., natural, human, information, technology) are available to an organization as it attempts to resolve its problems.

Katz and Kahn argue that there is a generally sequential relationship between the five sectors as successive attempts are made to control the turbulence in the environment. "As the physical environment no longer guarantees an assured supply of raw material and energy and is poisoned by our industrial complex, we turn to new technology and scientific development to provide a new physical balance. Technology and science in their overconcentration on physical versus human problems in turn are checked at the (higher) level of political norms and societal values."[23]

The important points for this discussion of contingency theory are the recognition of the fields of forces in the external environment that emit problems which can impact on a school system, and the wide variance in the four major dimensions which shape the nature of that impact. The next section of this paper examines the notion of a "fit" between environmental demands and organizational structures.

Organizational Structure and the Environment

Zoologists have long been interested in the way animals have evolved in order to survive and prosper in their environments. Giraffes, for

example, developed long legs and tall necks to enable them to feed on greens high in the air, and monkeys developed prehensile tales to facilitate movement between and among trees. In a like manner the so-called contingency theorists, following in the tradition of the structural-functionalists, [24] but with a greater emphasis on changing situations, have a special interest in the adaption of organizations to their environments. The reward of a successful adaptation is survival and perhaps even prosperity.

The pioneer contingency theorists who laid the basic conceptual foundation in the area of organization structure are the Woodward studies in the mid-1950's, Burns and Stalker, Thompson, and Lawrence and Lorsch.[25] Joan Woodward, in her study of 100 English manufacturing companies, set out to find if generally acknowledged traditional principles of formal organization were in operation.[26] After finding the principles of organization were widely ignored, she traced the patterns of general uniformity of structure she found in different types of organizations to the type of technology employed in those organizations. For example, technology calling for continuous process production and technology calling for custom manufacturing resulted in different organizational structures. Successful firms with similar production technologies tended to display similar organizational structures. Hence, the technology of an organization became a key "situational" variable in determining the character of its structure.

Burns and Stalker studied twenty British firms in the electronics industry.[27] They identified two polar types of management styles, referred to as <u>mechanistic</u> and <u>organic</u>, found at the ends of a continuum.

The organizations studied were found at various points on the continuum, and they were capable of moving back and forth depending on the pressures for stability or change. "Both forms represent a 'rational' form of organization," Burns and Stalker concluded, "in that they both, in our experience, be explicitly and deliberately created and maintained to exploit the human resources of a concern in the most efficient manner feasible in the circumstances of the concern."[28]

In some respects, a mechanistic organization has many of the characteristics comparable to Weber's bureaucratic organization.[29] For example, a reliance on the hierarchy for communication, coordination, task definition and role expectations as well as centralized decision-making and a highly defined network of rules and procedures. The mechanistic form of organization and administration was most efficient in those organizations which existed in basically stable situations with predictable conditions prevailing.

The organic organizational form is the most effective in organizations faced with changing conditions. A continuous reassessment of tasks and assignments is conducted with a specialized knowledge and experience that can contribute to "real" problem-solving. Centers of communication and decision-making often shift to those individuals and points in the system that are best able to handle them in a given situation rather than be constrained by standing operating procedures and hierarchical rigidities. Hence, the stability of conditions as contrasted with their instability become key "situational" variables in determining the most efficient and effective style (mechanistic or organic) of organization and administration.

Lawrence and Lorsch are probably the major prime movers behind contingency theory as a field of study.[30] Based on their empirical study of ten organizations with varying levels of economic performance in three

different industrial environments (plastics, consumer foods, standardized containers), they argue that different types of organizations face different types of environments, such as uncertain to certain, homogeneous to diverse. The differening characteristics of the environment result in the emergence of different types of structures and processes within corresponding organizations.

Organizations with an uncertain and diverse environment, for purposes of obtaining high levels of efficiency, tended to be composed of differentiated and integrated subsystems. The organization needs differentiated subunits because each subunit confronts a different task posed by the organization's diverse environment. Within these various subunits, differentiation occurs in terms of distinct objectives, time requirements, interpersonal orientation, delegation of decision making, and formality of structure. In a school, for example, subsystems of teachers, vice principals, and maintenance personnel have different objectives, degrees of authority, time frames, and academic skills.

Within a differentiated organization, the integration of subunits is critical. Integration refers to the quality of the state of collaboration essential for achieving a unity of effort. This collaboration comes in the form of flexibility of procedures, open communication, shared information, and the presence of special integrating personnel. In contrast, those organizations operating in certain and homogeneous environments tended to operate in a mechanistic fashion. Hence, the certainty or uncertainty of the environment and its diversity or homogeneity became key "situational" variables in determining the most effective and efficient form (degree of differentiation and integration) of organization and administration.

In short, issues of organization and administration cannot be understood in isolation of the situational character of the environment. Kast and Rosenweig stress the following:

> 1. The closed/stable/mechanistic organizational form is more appropriate for routine activities where productivity is a major objective, and/or technology is relatively uniform and stable; where decision-making is programmable; and where environmental forces are relatively stable and certain.
>
> 2. The open/adaptive/organic [differentiated and integrated] organizational form is more appropriate for nonroutine activities where creativity and innovation are important; where heuristic decision-making processes are necessary and where the environment is relatively uncertain and turbulent.[31]

In the educational setting, Gabarro supported the arguments of Lawrence and Lorsch in his study of two small urban school systems.[32] He found that the school system that proved to be more adaptive according to several performance indicators (achievement scores, quality of placement, dropout rates, attendance, and incidence of violence) had attained higher states of differentiation and integration than the less adaptive system. Also, Baldridge supported the arguments in his analysis of two research projects of organizational change in schools.[33] He found that schools with differentiated subsystems operating in heterogeneous environments are more likely to be innovative than less differentiated schools operating in relatively stable homogeneous environments.

Hanson and Brown found that problems emerging from a school's turbulent environment must proceed through a series of stages and can be deflected in any number of directions depending on the set of contingencies surrounding each stage.[34] Similar types of problems (e.g., discipline or academic weaknesses or resource shortages) tend to generate similar types

of contingencies, therefore some degree of predictability tends to emerge once the type of problem and the nature of the contingencies facing it have been identified.

At this point it might be useful to construct a conceptual framework that incorporates the major contingency theory ingredients discussed thus far. This framework will be cast in an educational setting to illustrate the core elements of the emerging perspective.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Traditional views of organizational structure concentrate on elements such as, the hierarchical relationship of roles, centralized authority, rules and regulations, and span of control.[35] System theorists, however, tend to view structure more in terms of the interdependence of subunits and the relationship of each to the whole.[36] The school, for example, is made up of academic departments which in turn are made up of specific classes. Central to understanding the actions of the system as a whole is an understanding of what each subsystem is doing and the functional (or dysfunctional) contribution each is making to the whole.

Harold Leavitt has categorized the key ingredients of a subsystem as the interactions of (a) tasks, (b) structure, (c) technology, and (d) people.[37] Additionally, the various subsystems maintain degrees of differentiation and integration. The differentiation and integration establish the condition for what Weick calls a "loosely coupled system," with the subunits maintaining various degrees of autonomy and decisional discretion.[38] A school system maintains many such subsystems, such as:

guidance, maintenance, personnel, evaluation, learning and instruction, information management, food service, and athletics. As Figure 1 points out, these various subsystems interact with one another and are linked through a leadership, or management control, subsystem to make up the whole.

Hence, as contingency theory suggests, as some aspect of the environment becomes turbulent (e.g., parental complaints over course content or an increase in school accidents), the appropriate subsystem is in place and can emerge to treat the issue. Thus, time and energy from the entire organization do not have to be diverted from various priority projects.

Unfortunately, all too often educational organizations seem to prefer constraining the differentiation and integration of the subsystems by practicing what Cyert and March earlier called "uncertainty avoidance."[39] This practice tends to place tight constraints on the various subsystems by insisting on the application of standard operating procedures and making traditional bureaucratic responses that are intended to suffocate or ignore turbulent issues.[40] This practice limits long range planning efforts and diverts energy and resources to short term "fire fighting." All too often the outcome is that the organization can survive, but at the expense of resolving, or at least treating, its major long run, persistent problems.

In short, the conceptual framework of contingency theory introduced in Figure 1 has emphasized the major ingredients of: internal and external environments which range between turbulent and placid on specific issues, an open system which is made up of subsystems, a particular technology associated with each subsystem, and degrees of differentiation and integration between subsystems.

Given the diversity of problems and processes present in a contingency theory view of management, a significant question arises. How can an organization such as a school, make intelligent choices in what appears to be a very uncertain environment? Such choices are essential in establishing the desired close match between the organization and its environment. As the next section of this paper will point out, the answer is a very special set of planning processes uniquely suited to the situational character of organizational life.

Contingency Planning

A principal means of responding intelligently to conditions of uncertainty in the environment is by contingency planning. Traditional managerial planning is defined as the ". . . determination of a desired set of future conditions, the strategies required to achieve these ends, and the formulation of the estimated means (activities and resources) necessary for goal accomplishment. This definition identifies the three parts of managerial planning: the establishing of objectives, strategies to achieve those objectives, and a step-by-step determination of the activities and resources necessary to attain them."[41] Contingency planning can work within the traditional definition when emphasis is given to the situational character of environmental contingencies that can impact upon and influence organizational events. Therefore through contingency planning the organization strives to identify the principal contingencies and prepare various alternative strategies, one of which will hopefully be an effective response to the development of events. These critical contingencies are usually identified through a process known as forcasting.

Forcasting is the process by which pertinent information about the

future is gathered in an attempt to identify what the critical contingencies will probably be at a given time. These contingencies usually involve the identification of constraints and opportunities, such as a declining tax base or an increase in federal funding. Forcasting should take place in those environmental domains identified earlier by Katz and Kahn as: (1) cultural, (2) political, (3) economic, (4) informational and technical, and (5) physical.[42]

Sound forcasting makes possible three sequential levels of planning which together make up the contingency planning process. This process is intended to diminish the levels of uncertainty by making studied assessments of future conditions and events, and then by preparing advance responses to alternative "situations" that might emerge. These three sequential levels of planning are as follows:

(1) Strategic Planning. This level draws directly from the forcasts, is long term, and either "proactive" or "reactive" in nature. If the planning thrust is proactive, the strategic plan is intended to assess available alternative futures from which to choose. If reactive, the thrust is to provide early warning on the character of the forces sweeping down on the organization. Thus, alternative protective measures can be prepared.

(2) Policy Planning. This second level is based on the strategic plans and leads to the formation of substantive goals, the procedures for reaching those goals, and the means for evaluating them.

(3) Tactical Planning. This level is short or mid-range and identifies the various alternatives of action which might proceed along various routes to achieve the policy objectives.

Finally, senarios can be developed which speculate on the evolution of alternative strands of events (each strand built around different key contingencies) that emerge from the forcasts and move through the strategic, policy, and tactical stages. Given these differing hypothetical strands of events, the managers speculate on the available alternate responses to each. Choice among alternatives can then be made by applying what March and Simon identify as minimax criterion. That is, if the managers tend to be pessimistic risk takers they will ". . . select the alternative whose 'worst set of consequences' is preferred to the worst sets attached to other alternatives".[43] For optimistic risk takers the maximax criterion may be applied which is the opposite of the other.

Again the point should be emphasized that the contingency planning process plays a central role in reducing the degrees of uncertainty and therefore leads toward a more effective match between an organization and its environment. As Figure 1 indicates, a key element in this network of ideas and events is the leader of the organization. This leadership role is the subject of the next section of this paper.

Contingency Theory of Leadership

Traditionally, the concept of leadership was studied apart from the special situations of specific organizations. Effective leadership was associated with unique psychological traits possessed by a few or a specific set of behaviors that were appropriate and applicable for any form of organization.[44]

Fred Fiedler has been the principal scholar in shifting the field toward contingency theories of leadership.[45] He has worked toward identifying the most effective matches between one of two possible leadership styles (task-

motivated vs. relationship-motivated) within combinations of three specific situational characteristics of an organization, such as: (1) good vs. poor leader-member relations, (b) high vs. low task structure, or (c) strong vs. weak power positions. Reflecting on the data from his numerous studies, Fiedler writes:

> The basic findings of the Contingency Model are that task-motivated leaders perform generally best in very "favorable" situations, i.e., either under conditions in which their power, control and influence are very high (or, conversely, where uncertainty is very low) or where the situation is unfavorable, where they have low power , control and influence. Relationship-motivated leaders tend to perform best in situations in which they have moderate power, control and influence.[46]

Other contingency theories of leadership have emerged which concentrate on different contingency variables, such as motivation in Path-Goal theory.[47] Path-Goal theory emphasizes four possible leader behaviors: (1) directive, (2) supportive, (3) achievement oriented, and (4) participative, which interact with two categories of contingency variables (a) subordinate characteristics, and (b) environmental factors.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's revision of an earlier seminal manuscript emphasizes two leadership styles, "boss-centered" and "subordinate-centered," which interact with four categories of contingency variables: (1) forces in the manager, (2) forces in subordinates, (3) forces in the situation, and (4) forces in the environment.[48]

It is important to note that two branches of thought exist regarding the flexibility of leadership style. One branch argues that leadership styles (e.g., task oriented vs. people oriented) are basically fixed in individuals and cannot be modified at will. Thus, situations in organizations must be thoroughly studied, as well as the leadership styles of

managerial candidates. Then a manager can be selected whose style fits the specific requirements of a specific situation.[49]

The second branch contends that the leadership style of managers is flexible and can vary according to the demands of specific situations. The best managers, therefore, are able to recognize the demands of a specific situation and can shift their leadership style accordingly (e.g., democratic to unilateral actions).[50]

Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, the field of education has largely ignored the contingency theory of leadership and has not advanced much beyond the earlier traditional forms.[51] Given the wide ranging environments of our school settings (e.g., inner city--suburban, high wealth--economically depressed, private--public), research which stresses making effective matches between leadership styles and organizational situations seems to be a natural and necessary endeavor.

Research Questions on Contingency Theory

Fred Luthans, reflecting on the pioneer studies of contingency theory, comments that, simply speaking, the important point is that ". . . if the organization's internal environment is compatible with the external environment, the organization will tend to be effective. This empirically derived contingency conclusion has significant implications for the future development of organization theory and design."[52] Certainly the special characteristics of schools, such as the teaching-learning technology, professionalism, school board governance procedures, demographic characteristics, etc., and the implications they have for unique management situations would make fruitful and interesting avenues of research.

At this point specific contingency theories of educational administration

do not exist. This paper has introduced a number of issues that might give an initial sense of direction. Cast as general research questions, these issues are as follows:

1. As the environment of a school becomes turbulent, (a) is there a tendency for the internal subsystems to become more differentiated and integrated in order to respond to the turbulence? or (b) do they become more mechanistic and standardized to defend against the turbulence?

2. Do educational organizations develop different mechanistic or organic responses according to different types of environmental turbulence (e.g., cultural, political, economic, informational and technical, and physical)?

3. In what ways do the ill-defined teaching-learning technology of educational organizations inhibit or facilitate a closer match with the demands and constraints of the external environment?

4. Do leadership styles of school administrators genuinely shift between task-motivated and relationship-motivated styles as situations shift and call for different forms of leader behavior?

5. How do leadership styles in educational organizations become modified, if at all, in response to increasing or decreasing: (a) job security, (b) crisis conditions in the school, (c) professionalism of the teachers, (d) information clarity or ambiguity surrounding core problems, (e) lead time to critical decisions, (f) availability of financial resources for school programs, (g) community anxiety over student test scores, (h) racial tension in schools. (These are illustrations of contingency variables which can be drawn from the five environmental sectors described earlier.)

6. In educational organizations, which situational contingency variables are the most significant in influencing the relationship between specific leadership styles and satisfactory levels of goal achievement?

7. As the external environment becomes more technologically complex, do the management systems of schools fall under pressures to improve their sophistication of planning methods?

8. At the school district level, as contrasted with the local school level, what proportion of time and energy is dedicated to strategic planning as opposed to policy and tactical planning?

9. Do educational organizations conduct forcasting exercises? If so, in what sectors of the external environment are forcasting efforts focused?

Conclusion

In recent years, gaining an understanding of the special "situational" relationships between environmental, organizational, and performance variables has become viewed more and more as a key to improving the management process. The intent of a contingency theory of management is to establish an optimal "match" between the environmental demands (and support) and an organization's response capabilities. In discussing a contingency theory view of this "match," concepts were introduced dealing with areas of (1) organizational structure, (2) the planning process, and (3) leadership styles, which respond directly to critical issues of uncertainty.

In concluding this paper, the author identified several general research questions intended to give focus to some of the basic issues that need to be investigated in pursuing the development of a contingency theory view of education.

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Figure 1

Differentiated and Integrated Subsystems